

Church of the Damascus Road Fall 2025 Newsletter

God's Been Good to Us!



It's cooling off outside, but we're just getting warmed up at CODR. The Damascus House has been up and running for 6 months now and we love what God is doing in the lives of These men. They're working hard and all have received high praise from their employers for the wonderful job they're doing. Our hope with this facility is to create a positive and supportive atmosphere for spiritual transformation and I think we're doing it. Praise God!

The picture above is from one of our Monday night food and fellowship gatherings. Special thanks to Candace and Dennis Booth for providing an amazing meal (*Jabbar especially loved the homemade ice cream!*)

To the right is a picture of myself and Diane Ohrtman at the Western Iowa Synod Assembly. Diane is our new CODR Council President and has been active serving the ministry for many years. Thanks Diane for all the great gifts you bring to CODR Prison Ministry!



How about these amazing quilts! Special thanks to the wonderful ladies at Grace Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge IA for blessing us with their talents. Each resident will get their own quilt that they can keep as a warm reminder of God's love and the blessings of membership in His family. We are so grateful for the support we get from our church community in Fort Dodge. We truly are one "Big C" church!

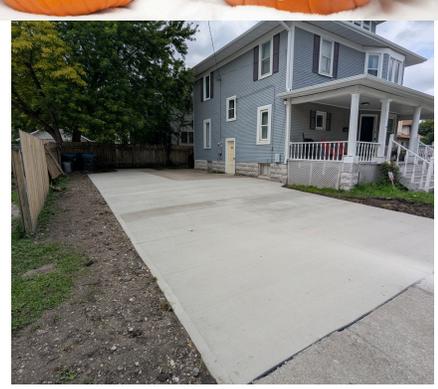
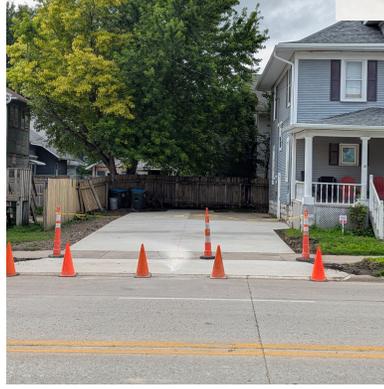
(Pictured - Robert Messenger and Tracy Castle)

Pastor Kelli would love to come to your church or community group and share about the wonderful work of CODR. Give us a call or email.

Ministry Update from Pastor Kelli Glasgo

The work continues at the Damascus House. We're not only renovating the lives of our residents, we're renovating the property God's blessed us with at 512 N 15th in Fort Dodge.

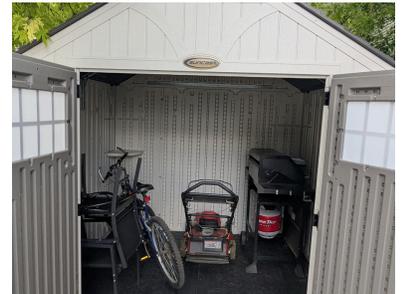
The latest much needed improvements are a brand new driveway (thanks to MC Concrete for doing an awesome job!) and a brand new shed for storing our lawn equipment, grill and various other items. The parking is so much better now and the shed really helps. Plus we had fun putting it together!



None of this happens without the incredible support we get from churches and individuals like you all. We were blessed this year to receive very generous grants from some of our local churches for improvements to the property and to help with transportation (*see reentry highlight below*). This allows us to be debt free and focus all our resources on providing great support for our guys.



The last project for this year will be renovating our lawn and landscaping before winter so stay tuned, we'll be reaching out looking for some green thumbs to help. We've already received many positive comments about the improvements we've made and know that this is just the beginning.



Speaking of volunteers, thanks to everyone who showed up for our volunteer appreciation picnic June 8th. It was great getting to see everybody together in one place and enjoy some fellowship. We had people who've been with CODR for 20+ years along side people serving for the first time. God has truly blessed us all in this wonderful ministry!



Reentry Highlight - Akil Jabbar

One of the most rewarding things for me is getting to see the tangible rewards of the hard work these guys are putting in. Akil logged a lot of miles walking back and forth to his job at the HyVee bakery through all kinds of weather. He stayed focused on his goals, saved his money and with a little help from a transportation grant was able to purchase a reliable vehicle recently. Good things happen to us when we just keep putting one foot in front of the other. Great job Akil!



Angel Tree Sign Up Event at FDCF

We were honored to help with the Angel Tree sign up event August 13th. Over 100 men signed up that day and heard the Gospel from the team at Hope Lutheran Church in Ankeny. For those that don't know - *"Angel Tree Christmas™ equips churches and other organizations to restore and strengthen relationships between incarcerated parents and their children and families. Every Christmas, Angel Tree mobilizes local churches and organizations to minister to hundreds of thousands of children by delivering a gift, the Gospel message, and a personal message of love on behalf of their mom or dad behind bars."* www.prisonfellowship.org



We Heart Fort Dodge local ministry event

We are blessed in Fort Dodge with several great local churches that love to serve in their community. "We Heart Fort Dodge" is an annual event organized by the Fort Dodge Pastors group where teams of God's people go outside the church walls and share the love of Christ. There were groups at laundromats paying for people's laundry, groups washing cars, groups giving out free hot dogs, groups sharing treats at ICCC and our CODR group hosted a free cookout for the residents and staff at Fort Dodge Community Corrections. The goal was to serve and pray for as many people as possible and have a great time - Mission Accomplished!



Brothers in Blue

September 18th we will be partnering with the Iowa Brothers in Blue organization to put on an all day event at NCCF (prison in Rockwell City). This is an event designed as a "crash course in Christianity" and is open to all residents of NCCF who would like to know more about Christ. Special thanks to all the volunteers who make this event happen and the staff at NCCF for their support!



2025 has been a great year for our partnership with Prison Fellowship. We started the 2nd FDCF cohort in May and the very first PFG cohort at the prison in Rockwell City July 10th!

PFG is my life! I have gotten closer to GOD and I feel better which lets me know that I'm on the right path. PFG also travels with me. It's instilled in my everyday life. I find myself rereading parts of the books and passing on the tools to others that I feel either need them or can use them. So I'm grateful that I've got to be a part of this great program.

PFG has provided a space where I can feel comfortable with looking deeper within myself and confronting the areas in my life that are not yet healed. I have been able to see God a lot more clearly and start healing in areas that the pain had crippled me in the past. God has been at work in my life and in my mind and I am open to the changes God has in store for my life.

It's amazing, a very good experience. I'm becoming a better person mentally and physically. I'm less angry and way more happier. I'm moving forward into better things. I believe I've changed and the people in this class believe the same.

PFG is showing me ways to care and examine subjects from angles I would not have done before. God keeps showing me He is always there and He isn't going anywhere. I like PFA because it is voluntary. The guys in it want to be there. It's real, it's scary and it's an opportunity for real change and growth through Christ.

Chris, Connie, Scott, Kathy, Matt, Lisa, Don, Ted, Mark, Steve, Bob, Solveig, Kelli and Mark DeJong have truly inspired me and kept me going in my faith. They have helped change lives and made a difference where some felt there wouldn't be, so thank you!

Here lately I have grown to open up to vulnerability, of letting others know the real me. Even though it is very scary and uncomfortable for me. So I guess what I'm saying is PFG has been huge for my spiritual growth. Praise PFG and most of all praise God and all of his gifts.

I'm developing more patience, am a better listener and an all around calmer demeanor. I'm more relaxed, confident and comfortable with myself. I'm able to handle situations with a light heart and a more helpful personality. This experience, this program, this group of fellow inmates as well as the volunteers are showing the way to positive outcomes. Thank you!

PFG is helping me to forgive others and become more compassionate and empathetic toward others. I'm building a better relationship with God and want to show his love through myself.

I really like how the class is going and all the information that it teaches us to change for the better and how it brings us closer to the Lord and different ways to fellowship with others.

I really enjoy seeing the growth each person is going through. When we share our thoughts and feelings we get to learn when, why and how to avoid triggers and change our behavior. The sharing also includes wisdom shared within the group.

PFG helps me open up. It helps me be open to all possibilities of life and it helps me and teaches me how to live a good life, how to love God and how to be thankful for everything that goes on in my life.

I have learned to stop being passive aggressive in my words and actions and to be assertive with my communication. At first it was hard but more practice makes it easier.

PFG has helped me be more in control of my life, actions and feelings. It has also helped me be more caring and get closer to God.

I'm learning about how to grow in my feelings, how to manage them and how they come to be. I'm also learning why having faith is so important.

PFG has changed my way of thinking in many ways. It helps me find who I am and helps me write it all down so I can see also.

PFG has been one of the most rewarding and inspiring activities I have participated in. Working and communicating weekly with the guys always reminds me to stay humble. Most of us have, at some time in our lives, been one decision from being in the same shoes as the guys here. It keep me reminded that we all have a story, a past, and that through finding our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a future we can look forward to.

- Lisa Scott, PFG Outside Volunteer

A prayer from one of our PFG Mentors (graduate from the 1st cohort that is helping with the 2nd)

This is to the man upstairs, I no longer wish to be in control of my life. As I write, guide me in your purpose and will. Keep me in your favor the rest of my earthly days. Show me the error of my thinking and help me correct it.

I'm deeply disturbed when men have no respect and are full of arrogant pride. Teach them as well.

Seeing myself as a masterpiece, I'm perfectly flawed to your specifications. I seek daily your purpose and wish to have passion for that alone. Help me, again and again as I am sure to fail. forgive me for my many sins. They no longer appeal to me like before.

Bless me with gifts of the spirit in which I may display your glory again and again each and every day. Being a spark, I'm so bright already in such a dark world. Illuminate your instrument of spiritual warfare so I may lead other sinners the ways of your son, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

A Humbling Experience

In August I was presented with the Iowa Corrections Association Outstanding Citizen Award. This Award is given to:

"An individual or group who has had a significant, positive impact on corrections in the State of Iowa. The recipient should not currently be a paid corrections employee. Their efforts, whether in the public or private sector, may have been relatively unsung or widely acclaimed in the community previously."

This was a huge and unexpected honor, made even more special by the fact that the nomination had come from incarcerated individuals and counselors at FDCF.

The reality is that this award really belongs to all the great CODR & Prison Fellowship volunteers. You are the ones who make all the great programs we run possible. Your dedication and commitment to this ministry makes an incredible difference in the lives of these men and their families.

It may be hard to see sometimes, but together we really are making a difference.

Check out the article below!



KCCI, Sept 8, 2025 - A new report from the Iowa Department of Corrections shows a decline in the number of inmates returning to prison.

The recidivism rate, which looks at the number of individuals returning to prison within three years of release, is 32.8% for fiscal year 2025. This marks a 3% decrease from the previous year and the lowest rate in the last decade. The department attributes this reduction to several factors:

- Prioritizing institutional and community-based treatment for high-risk individuals
- Continuously utilizing evidence-based practices
- Aligning and improving reentry practices
- Increasing access to treatment, education and vocational opportunities
- Training staff in core correctional practices (CCP)
- Enhancing case management training



Gov. Kim Reynolds commended the agencies working together to lower the recidivism rate. Reynolds said, "Through the leadership of Director Skinner and the dedicated staff at the Department of Corrections, incarcerated individuals are held accountable and also provided with opportunities for rehabilitation and successful reentry. This achievement demonstrates the power of collaboration and our continued commitment to public safety for every Iowan."

Iowa DOC Director Beth Skinner says she's proud of the staff at Iowa's prison facilities, community-based correction and central office. "Together, we are proving that accountability and opportunity can go hand-in-hand, and that Iowa can be a national leader in reducing recidivism and creating safer communities," said Skinner.

Support MENU

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Your generosity enables us to:

Provide bibles, devotional and recovery literature, Christmas cards, communion supplies, musical equipment, DVD resources, coffee, bulletins, sheet music, baptism supplies and pastoral leadership for the Fort Dodge & Rockwell City prison church congregations

Provide bikes, bus passes, haircuts, gift cards, bibles, devotional and recovery literature, hygiene supplies, clothing and transportation assistance to the men at the Fort Dodge men's halfway house

Operate The Damascus House which provides the men in our reentry program with a safe and affordable place to live and a community of Christian support

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Opportunities to serve:

Prison worship services – Worship with us at one of our amazing church services inside the prison. It's an experience you'll treasure!

Prison Fellowship Academy – Connect, encourage and grow with men in the Fort Dodge prison as we journey together through the PFA reentry education program in partnership with Prison Fellowship.

Connie's Closet – Collect men's clothing and hygiene supplies for Fort Dodge Men's halfway house. Donations can be dropped off at Grace Lutheran or St. Olaf Lutheran churches in Fort Dodge or give us a call and we can pick them up!

CODR Church Council – Join our amazing team of volunteer leaders as we make decisions for the future of this exciting ministry!

Giving Opportunities through Thrivent

thrivent

Thrivent
Action Teams
Generosity is meant to be shared.



Gather a volunteer team to put on a fundraiser, educational event or service activity—like landscaping, remodeling or painting at the Damascus House or hosting a CODR fundraiser. Thrivent will provide the resources you need to get started, including up to \$250 in seed money.



thrivent Choice®
Making
generosity easy

Through Thrivent Choice®, Thrivent clients with membership can contribute to organizations and causes they care about such as CODR—and influence how Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funding through Choice Dollars®.

Contact your Thrivent agent or the CODR office with any questions you may have. We'll help you get started!

**LIVE
GENEROUSLY**

Thank You So Much For Your Generosity!

Individuals

Adam & Inga Sanford, Augustana Women of ELCA, Barry Fisher,
Becky Ostheimer, Brian Underwood, Charles & Linda Danielson
Clark & Lindsay Morgan, Dale & Lisa Siebrect,
Daniel & Colleen Goodwin, Dave & Luann Bohnet,
Dennis & Candace Booth, Dennis & Denise Siefken, Dykstra Dairy,
Elwood Rieke, Gail Boock, Gary & Linda Eichelberger, Gary & Mary
Smith, George Hedges, Glen & Sharon Houts, James Willis, Janet Bird,
Jim & Mindy McColley, John Erritt, Kelli & Leah Glasgo,
Kim & Amy Courter, Larry & Cindy Lubinus, Lyle & Hilda Hartling,
Margaret Jackson, Mark & Connie Gustafson, Marlene Zech,
Melba Shelby, Michael & Janice Hiler, Richard & Julie Murphy,
Richard Houge, Roger Natte, Steve & Barb Licata,
Steve & Carol Moberg, Steve Pederson,
Terry & Marvel Trotter, Troy & Karyn Leininger, Vicki Wagner

Churches

1st Presbyterian - Jefferson, Augustana Lutheran Church- Manson
Bethany Lutheran Church - Emmetsburg,
Bethany Lutheran Church - Laurens

Church of the Damascus Road - North Central Correctional Facility

Crossway Evangelical Free Church - Fort Dodge

Faith Lutheran Church - Holstein

First Lutheran Church - Algona,

Immanuel Lutheran Church - Lytton, Jewel United Church of Christ

Impact Church - Fort Dodge Correctional Facility

Lost Island Lutheran Church

New Covenant - Fort Dodge, Our Savior's Lutheran Church - Albert City

Our Savior's Lutheran Church - Hummboldt,

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church - Rockwell City,

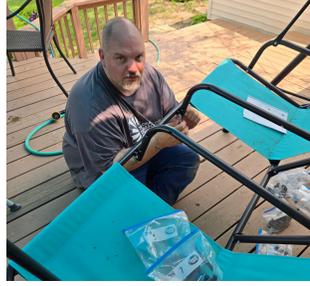
Washington Reformed Church

**Special Thanks to the following Church Foundations for supporting
our house remodeling efforts and transportation program**

*St. Olaf Lutheran Church - Fort Dodge IA, Grace Lutheran Church - Fort Dodge IA,
1st Presbyterian Church - Fort Dodge IA, Spirit of Hope - Rockwell City
and Zion Lutheran Church - Gowrie IA*



**THE CHURCH OF THE
DAMASCUS ROAD
PRISON MINISTRIES**



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